

**The International Symposium on Cultural Diplomacy in the USA 2012:
Cultural Diplomacy, National Security and Global Risks
“Leveraging Cultural Diplomacy for Democracy’s Future and the Common Good”
Remarks of Dr. Martha J. Kanter, Under Secretary
U.S. Department of Education, Washington, DC
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Thank you for your kind introduction, Mark. Let me first express my appreciation to you and your colleagues for your vision and initiative to found, build and strengthen the Institute for Cultural Diplomacy. Finding new ways to bring more people from around the world together to strengthen productive and mutually beneficial relationships is the right idea. It’s the right time for this work. And because all of you have come together here with this shared sense of mission and purpose, this is the right place for your symposium. I am honored to join you this morning, not only to associate myself and the Obama Administration with this work, but also to congratulate and thank everyone involved: those who join us at this gathering today and at the companion meetings taking place in other locations.

My main message, the one thing I hope you will remember from my presentation today, is that we must stay the course. Building a more cooperative, collaborative global community committed to intercultural awareness and respect is difficult, time-consuming, and often painstaking work. Most often, there is little or no glamour and, in many cases, it takes years, decades or even generations to harvest the fruits of even the most sensitively and sensibly developed plans, programs and interventions. But if the lessons of the last century have taught us anything, it is that the best investments we can make are those that lead to peaceful cooperation, mutual development, shared growth and prosperity, and a deeper understanding of the common aspirations we share as members of the same human family.

Like some of you, I was a teenager in the Sixties. And today I can’t help thinking about the words of a President who served in the White House when I was a young girl, long before I was called to Washington, DC to serve as Under Secretary of Education by President Obama and Secretary Duncan three years ago. In 1963 at American University, the words of President Kennedy mean even more to me now than ever.

“What kind of peace do we seek?” President Kennedy asked the world almost 50 years ago this very month. “Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, the kind that enables men, [women] and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children - not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women, not merely peace in our time but peace for all time... And if we cannot end now our differences,” he said, “at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children’s future. And we are all mortal.”

President Kennedy could not have possibly imagined all the changes we have seen, shaped, welcomed and endured nearly 50 years hence. But those of us who were moved by his vision then, and those who continue to be moved by it today, now have in

front of us the greatest set of opportunities in all of human history: to bring that vision of a more cooperative world based on mutual respect, understanding and even trust to its fullest expression in the years ahead.

We live in an era characterized by a deeply interconnected global economy, in fact, an increasing knowledge economy with transportation and communications technologies that are rapidly turning national borders into historical markers rather than the impenetrable barriers they once were. Everything we have and know - business, people, goods, diseases, and the medicines that treat them - all manner of problems and their solutions, now move across the world at unprecedented speed. And yet, despite all this progress, we also face a daunting set of challenges and positions so extreme that they often test our faith, the faith that we must have, the faith that our fellow citizens, our institutions, and our governments must together have to face and overcome them. Whether it is war or poverty, income inequality, lack of opportunity, violence against defenseless populations, climate change or the myriad other threats to our people and our environment, we face challenges on all sides that urgently cry out for solutions. Increasingly, these problems draw us together because they cross our borders as surely as the very air we breathe.

But I have some news for you; some very encouraging news. You see, I have spent much of the last three years traveling across our great country, listening to the voices of Americans who are working to turn things around. I have visited schools and communities, met with teachers, professors and students, community and business leaders, parents and many others. And I have come away from those experiences with my faith renewed and deepened. All across our country I have met people who are “thinking globally, and acting locally.” All across this country we see local, grassroots growing campaigns to roll back the tide of woe, to protect our environment, reduce needless waste, restrain the consumption of polluting forms of energy and, of vital importance to me, many too have also begun, in community after community, the hard, hard work of reshaping our schools and in many cases entire educational systems to get to the vision that President Obama expressed shortly after taking office, “for our nation to once again have the best educated, most competitive workforce in the world.”

President Obama and Secretary Duncan frequently remind people that they know the best ideas typically don’t originate in Washington, DC. As Secretary Duncan often says, “sometimes the people in Washington DC don’t even ask the right questions.” We know that is true. But we do know that a fundamental character of Americans is grounded in service to others. Today, millions of Americans every day volunteer to serve others, to help in their local communities and neighborhood schools, people who are working with patient determination in thousands of different ways to create the better world they’ve taken it upon themselves to build. I was fortunate to meet Bill Swanson, president of Raytheon, in my first year as under secretary. He was then also the volunteer president of the Business Higher Education Forum, a Washington think-tank, who told me that he was most proud of the 5,000 Raytheon employees working to help middle-school children improve their academic achievement levels, especially in STEM, science, technology, engineering and math, and even more

especially in our high poverty schools. A year and a half later, I asked how his initiative was doing and he said, “We now have 10,000 employees volunteering in our middle schools and we’re deploying a world-class curriculum for teachers to use in their classrooms for free, whenever they can. Plus we’re helping the teachers build capacity in STEM.

As you can see, one of the best things about being a senior official in the Obama Administration is the opportunity to meet people like Bill, those who work with us, and those around the country like you, who are united in their dedication to the common good. And what I have learned is that when it comes to strengthening cultural diplomacy, we Americans have a vast untapped reservoir. We have yet to even skim the surface when it comes to engaging all of our fellow citizens who want to be part of the work that we are discussing today.

There are literally millions upon millions of Americans who are ready to step up their efforts, millions who are ready to do more, to help our country, our world, and our entire human family hoist itself up to the next rung on evolution’s ladder, the rung where suspicion is replaced by engagement, hostility becomes hospitality, ignorance becomes knowledge, and knowledge leads to deeper understanding, respect and ultimately trust. Because, in the final analysis, that is really what cultural diplomacy is all about. And I am convinced there is no nation on earth with a deeper well of talent, shared values and good will that can be harnessed to expand cultural diplomacy. Imagine the vision of every American having the knowledge and harnessing the opportunity to become an ambassador of cultural diplomacy in his or her community, each and every day, 24 x 7 x 365.

That knowledge, the knowledge about who we are as Americans, is what informs the programs and proposals that President Obama and Secretary Duncan have put in place to foster and support cultural diplomacy. I can’t think of anything better to illustrate this commitment than our Administration’s support of breakthrough improvements at all levels of our education delivery systems. Education has been called the “seed corn” of democracy – and it is also the foundation on which cultural diplomacy can best take root, grow and thrive.

Education as a Primary Tool of Cultural Diplomacy

To help you better understand how we connect these dots let me describe our overall approach to education as a domestic and international priority, with special attention to the ways we are making it increasingly integrative and comprehensive. As background, since the mid-1990s, the U.S. Department of Education’s Fund for the improvement of Postsecondary Education – FIPSE, for short - has supported collaborations between U.S. colleges and universities and their counterparts throughout the European Union, Brazil, Canada, Mexico and Russia. The value of these arrangements for all participating countries is reflected in the creation of more than fifty certificate or dual degree programs, as well as over 300 multi-lateral curricular and mobility programs for hundreds of students in a variety of

disciplines, including business, economics, engineering, environmental science and management, with others in the pipeline.

We have learned many valuable lessons through these collaborations and also through the Title VI and Fulbright-Hays programs, which are administered by our Office of International and Foreign Language Education. These programs are designed to increase our nation's expertise in foreign language learning and international and area studies. One lesson we have taken to heart is how vitally important it is for Americans to become well-grounded in the cultures and languages of the places where they choose to study, live, and work. We've also expanded the critical role of research, program and course development, and student exchanges designed to further economic growth and collaboration across nations as essential elements for building successful and lasting partnerships across boundaries.

In the 2011 Open Doors report of the Institute for International Education, we see that the time is now right for us to shift from a programmatic approach to a more systemic strategy. New international student enrollment in U.S. institutions is at a record high, increasing by nearly 6% over the previous year, and 32% since 2000-2001. The overall number of international students studying in the U.S. climbed by nearly 5%, comprising 3.5% of the total student enrollment in U.S. higher education.

You might be interested to know that the top five places of origin of more than half of all international students studying in the U.S. are China, India, South Korea, Canada and Taiwan. The remaining top places of origin are quite diverse, and from every hemisphere. The top five fields of study these students choose are: business and management; engineering; math and computer science; physical and life sciences; and social sciences.

The trends for U.S. students studying abroad – again according to Open Doors 2011 – also trend upward. Participation by U.S. students in study-abroad grew by 4% over the previous year and has more than tripled in two decades. Fourteen of the top 25 destinations for students from the U.S. studying abroad are beyond European borders. It is worth noting that U.S. students' top five fields of study differ from the predominantly STEM oriented fields chosen by their international peers. U.S. students who study abroad tend instead to focus their studies in the social sciences; business and management; humanities; fine or applied arts; and the physical and life sciences.

Buried in all of these statistics is something quite special. For these exchanges represent more than the sums I have described. They are, more importantly, the currency of cultural diplomacy, the one by one, one-to-one relationships that knit our global civilization together. And we are working hard to strengthen that foundation and build on it.

Our New International Strategy at the U.S. Department of Education: Strengthening U.S. Education and Advancing International Priorities

This year, the U.S. Department of Education prepared its first, fully-articulated international strategic plan with two overarching goals: (1) to strengthen U.S. education; and (2) to advance our nation's international priorities. In today's increasingly integrated

world, no nation can launch a fully effective domestic education agenda without also addressing global needs and trends, and nurturing a globally competent citizenry. Specifically, our new agenda aims to:

- Ensure the competitiveness of our nation and our workforce, in today's global economy;
- Educate for our own increasingly diverse U.S. society, and sustain the civic values of our democracy;
- Promote national security and diplomacy;
- Collaborate with other nations to address global challenges; and
- Provide more U.S. students with a well-rounded education, including foreign language study.

Five main objectives support our strategic goals from 2012 through 2016. They range from plans at the federal, state, local and international levels to increase understanding of the importance of a world-class education for all students, to plans to develop, monitor and continuously improve the Department's international activities in an integrated and coordinated manner.

An important objective of our plan is to **increase the global competencies of all U.S. students, including those from traditionally disadvantaged groups**. The need for these competencies, which we think of as "21st Century skills applied to the world," is clear – both for U.S. civil society, and for our nation's workforce. The National Research Council reports, quite rightly in my view, that "a pervasive lack of knowledge about foreign cultures and foreign languages threatens the security of the United States as well as its ability to compete in the global marketplace and produce an informed citizenry."

Right now, just 30% of U.S. secondary students are enrolled in a foreign language course. Even worse, two-thirds of Americans aged 18 to 24 cannot find Iraq on a map of the Middle East. They can't find Iraq! Further, African-Americans and Latinos continue to be underrepresented among students who study abroad. Our thinking about needed knowledge and skills has been informed by The Global Competence Task Force, formed and led by the Council of Chief State School Officers' EdSteps Initiative and the Asia Society Partnership for Global Learning. These organizations have pointed out that to acquire and exercise global competencies, students must be able to understand the world through disciplinary and interdisciplinary study and act on issues of global significance.

To succeed academically, our students need opportunities to investigate the world beyond their immediate environment. They need opportunities to recognize perspectives – their own and those of others – and to be able to communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences. They also must be able to take action – to translate their ideas into constructive endeavors. Because before we can get to cultural diplomacy we must first ensure cultural competence. Put another way, without culturally competent students, we won't be able to maximize the benefits of cultural diplomacy.

Today, our students' success rests on their ability to be innovative, entrepreneurial, collaborative, and, for many we hope, visionary. This means our colleges and universities must place a far greater emphasis on helping students understand their responsibilities as global citizens, helping them work effectively on diverse teams, educating them to acquire intercultural competencies, challenging them to make ethical decisions for the common good, and encouraging them to engage in their communities locally and globally. We believe that engaging students in these ways will help our nation meet the President's 2020 goal with more graduates who are better prepared and ready to lead us well into the 21st Century.

Our Department's increased emphasis on building global competencies includes more attention to world languages, area studies, and intercultural experiences. From new and existing postsecondary initiatives and programs, to our Blueprints to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, we're encouraging state and local institutions to incorporate global competencies into common academic core subjects, into college- and-career ready standards, and into expected learning outcomes. We also believe we should shift the focus of our postsecondary grant programs from the acquisition of deep subject matter expertise for a small number of students, to a greater emphasis on the acquisition of broad global competencies for as many students as possible.

A Heightened Focus on International Benchmarking

We are also very interested in **enhancing federal, state and local education policy and practice by applying lessons learned from other countries to drive excellence and innovation both here and abroad.** We are doing much more to identify, learn from and incorporate – where it makes sense - effective, high-impact practices from other countries into the Department's policy agenda, program design and implementation. Cultural diplomacy must be a two-way street. Otherwise, it is just a monologue without anyone listening. And we are listening.

This is why we are so focused on evidence, collecting, analyzing and disseminating data, and convening strategic meetings to learn from others, problem solve together, and strengthen our relationships and programs across the globe. We also want to delve more deeply into what works in other countries, how their innovative practices can be applied in the U.S.

For example, we are placing a greater emphasis on participation in, and findings from, international benchmarking efforts like OECD's Program for International Student Assessment and the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes – as well as joining the second cycle of the OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey, to be conducted in 2013. Secretary Duncan has also requested special reports, like one from the OECD entitled: "Strong Performers and Successful Reformers in Education: Lessons From PISA for the United States," aimed at analyzing the practices of high-performing and rapidly improving countries – nations that not only do a better job than the U.S. at accelerating achievement and attainment nationwide, but are also doing a better job of closing achievement gaps among minority and disadvantaged students.

We want to learn from others. And we know that humility is a necessary lubricant for cultural diplomacy.

For example, in March of 2011, the Department of Education, the OECD and Education International, which is the global federation of teachers' unions, together with U.S.-based organizations, including the American Federation of Teachers, the Asia Society, the Council of Chief State School Officers, and the National Education Association, hosted an International Summit on the Teaching Profession. It was cultural diplomacy in action. This was the first event of its kind, designed to engage governments, education organizations and teachers' unions in intensive discussions about how to create a stronger teaching profession. Based on the success of the first Summit, the U.S. hosted a second one this year and the Netherlands has announced that it will host the third Summit in 2013.

The lessons learned from these meetings have had a direct impact on policy in our Administration – helping to shape a proposed \$5 billion program to strengthen and elevate the teaching profession in the U.S. With an urgent need to recruit a million teachers into the profession within the decade, and with far too much finger-pointing at teachers that is causing fragmentation and low morale, President Obama has proposed this new competitive grant program as a means to empower states and K-12 school districts that commit to pursuing bold reforms at every stage of the teaching profession. The new program is called RESPECT – Recognizing Educational Success, Professional Excellence, and Collaborative Teaching – and it reflects in significant ways the findings from the International Summit.

A Renewed Focus on Education Diplomacy

The last area I want to highlight today is to **advance U.S. international priorities in strategically important countries through active education diplomacy.** This goal encompasses our work with other countries established as priorities among the Departments of Education, State and Commerce. It also encompasses our efforts to support initiatives launched directly from the White House, including:

- The President's 100,000 Strong Initiative – to increase dramatically the number, and diversify the composition, of U.S. students studying in China;
- The 100,000 Strong in the Americas effort – to increase the number of U.S. and Latin American students studying in each others' countries to 100,000; and
- The Brazilian Science Without Borders international student exchange involving 101,000 students.

And, of course, it includes our interactions with dignitaries and other international visitors, and our collaborations with other nations in multilateral forums and organizations.

Secretary Duncan and our staff collaborate on an ongoing basis with education officials from around the globe. In three years, we've welcomed delegations from Afghanistan, Australia, Chile, Korea, Japan, New Zealand, Pakistan, Singapore, Russia, the Philippines and South Africa, to give just a partial list. Our leadership team represents the Department at global assemblies like the Education Ministerial meetings for OECD, the OAS and APEC, the UNESCO Higher Education Congress, and the UNESCO Technical and Vocational Education and Training Congress. With the State Department, we've led delegations to India, Japan, Brazil and Australia for intensive collaborative consultations on topics ranging from higher education, to equity for all students, to education for sustainable development. And, last year, we hosted two joint Higher Education Summits – one with India, and one with Indonesia – to reinforce ties, gauge the progress of existing efforts, and explore new ones.

Along these same lines, our international partnerships have yielded a wide range of bilateral education conferences, alliances, and other joint efforts. For example, we're implementing the first-ever U.S.-China Joint Workplan in Education. Activities thus far include the convening of mathematics experts in Washington and science education experts in Beijing. A second round of meetings with science education experts will take place this summer, along with an experts' forum for Chinese and American career and technical education experts.

In addition, the Department is working with the Council of Chief State School Officers and the Asia Society to promote sub-national exchanges of education leaders from the Chinese provinces and American states, as part of our plan. For example, last month education leaders from six U.S. states attended the 2012 Consultation on People-to-People Exchange, part of the Strategic and Economic Dialogue activities, to discuss building partnerships and visiting their sister provinces.

As you can see, we're working intently to achieve the goals and objectives of our new international strategy. Our plans are really a road map that we are pleased to share with you and your colleagues that can help us strengthen cultural diplomacy and increase education for all.

Before I conclude, let me also highlight one opportunity that cuts across all our efforts to promote cultural competencies and 21st Century learning: the unprecedented opportunity afforded by technology. There's not enough time today, or even this week if I held you here that long, to address this powerful factor fully in my remarks. But you should know that I come from Silicon Valley. Before joining the Obama Administration I served as chancellor of Silicon Valley's flagship community colleges: Foothill and De Anza Colleges. Our students even included Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs among others who have gone on to build companies and lead the world across many professions. So this is very personal for me. I've lived with technologies, start-ups and entrepreneurs for decades and have been educated in an environment of continuous change for continuous improvement and acceleration all along the way.

And I am very excited about what is happening now and what is coming next. Personalized learning, adaptive learning, peer learning enhanced by social networking, 21st century analytics, gamification and real-time artificial intelligence: we are entering

another new world that will transform education and society as we've known it. One of our greatest challenges is the complacency that accompanies the status quo, that causes people to become overly comfortable with how it is and shield themselves from new ideas and new knowledge which leads to new understanding, new forms of respect and new ways to trust one another and build communities for the common good of all.

Like President Obama and Secretary Duncan, I am excited about the growing trend in the development, use and continuous improvement of Open Educational Resources. As you know, Open Educational Resources are teaching and learning materials that are released with an intellectual property license that allows their free use and repurposing by others. We are experiencing an avalanche of new offerings in this area, MIT's Open Courseware project, and its new collaboration with Harvard, called ED-X, Carnegie Mellon's Open Learning Initiative, advances of the UK's Open University, and now even Udacity and Coursera that are just a few of the notable efforts that are giving students from around the world access to high-quality higher educational opportunities that just yesterday were available to only a select few.

Our Administration is supporting this work in many ways, including through the grants made by our Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College Career Training fund, or TAACCCT, to which Congress allocated \$2 billion dollars over four years to support the creation of new education and job-training resources that help people gain the knowledge and skills for jobs that pay family sustaining wages. Our partners at the Department of Labor have already awarded \$500 million dollars to support these projects and all of the new intellectual property produced, including full courses, will be released as Open Educational Resources and made available to anyone anywhere free of charge. We see this as an unprecedented opportunity to foster increased educational collaborations around the world. And we are really just at the beginning stage of this very exciting trend.

At the same time, I am delighted to note that community college and university partnerships and development are rapidly becoming a focal point for international collaboration. India, Brazil, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Mexico, China, Pakistan, Qatar and Namibia are just a few of the countries that are collaborating with U.S. institutions to develop innovative approaches to entrepreneurship, workforce education and high demand fields of study.

Clearly, these partnerships confer mutual benefits. For U.S. colleges, such partnerships provide an invaluable opportunity to internationalize curricula and program offerings, to co-develop ideas and products and to benefit from international R&D. Students benefit from the opportunity to work with students and scholars from other countries and to gain knowledge, skills, language and cultural awareness required for success in the global economy. Furthermore, these partnerships foster cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, which are critical to the establishment of just, equitable, and peaceful societies.

As I said at the beginning of my remarks, the challenges we all face cannot be underestimated. Unacceptably high rates of unemployment around the world are hitting our young people particularly hard. While faring better than some countries, the

United States is no exception. The overall unemployment rate in the U.S. stands at about 8 percent – but for young people in the U.S. between the ages of 16-19 that rate mushrooms to 25 percent or even more, depending on how you calculate the figures. And if we disaggregate the data a bit, we see even more alarming realities for those who fail to graduate from high school or complete postsecondary education and for members of minority communities. For young African-Americans, those between the ages of 16-19, the unemployment rate in March, 2012 was roughly 40 percent, for Hispanics in the same age group, 30 percent unemployed. What's more, we know that depressed earnings in these younger demographic groups is typically not a transitory state: those who start the earnings race so far behind are far more likely to stay behind as they get older.

Being born into poverty and a lack of opportunities should not be a life sentence. That is not acceptable to President Obama, Secretary Duncan nor, I'm sure, to all of us in this room. This is a shared problem we must solve. Around the world today, too small a minority of our people have access in a meaningful way to high-quality educational opportunities. And even fewer have access to high-quality post-secondary opportunities.

But in the undeveloped human capital around the world, the riches of the next generation reside. Their success will be our success. Illiterate, undernourished people scratching a living from dirt cannot power the world's economy. They cannot buy products, make products, trade or participate in economic growth. But with education, we can help those same individuals drive our next season of global growth and prosperity. We lift our nation and the nations of others when we give motivated learners around the world an opportunity to lift themselves with education.

That is why we must seek to do all we can to invest in education around the world to, in turn, support and strengthen our K-12 schools, colleges, universities and ultimately our nations to engage more deeply in the work of cultural diplomacy. We must work together and learn together, and yes, even play together, in new ways that deepen the bonds across cultures on which shared prosperity can take root. We must take advantage of the tools of modern technology, science, and communications to make intercultural awareness and collaboration the "new normal." And we must do it now, because our children, our families, and our world can't wait.

I began with the words of one President. So let me close with the words of another. On the night he secured his nomination as his party's choice for President of the United States, Barack Obama thrilled the standing room only crowd when he said: "we are the ones we have been waiting for." To that, today, I would add that you, those of you gathered here who are dedicated to the purposes we celebrate today, are the ones we have been waiting for. And I want you to know that our work together has only just begun. Thank you for the opportunity to share these thoughts with you.

I'll be happy to take some questions. Thank you very much.